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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH HUMAN RIGHTS OMBUDSMAN

REF: A. SAN SALVADOR 1485

[B](#). SAN SALVADOR 1525
[C](#). SAN SALVADOR 1264

[1](#). (U) On August 29, Ambassador Glazer visited the Salvadoran Human Rights Ombudsman, Oscar Luna, in his San Salvador office. In this, their first meeting, the Ambassador and Luna exchanged views on the importance of respect for human rights in democratic countries.

[2](#). (U) Luna stated that his focus as Ombudsman was on education and the "mediation role" of the Ombudsman's office (PDDH by its Spanish initials). He emphasized that he wants the PDDH to be more proactive and less reactive. The institution of the PDDH is critical in El Salvador, according to Luna, and it holds a dual role of ensuring government accountability while at the same time educating people in what they should expect from their government. He also said his office was interested in promoting the rights of the elderly and disabled in El Salvador

[3](#). (U) The Ambassador brought up the impact of crime and violence on life in El Salvador and told Luna that he viewed crime as a critical human rights issue. The Ambassador imparted his "take back the streets" message, noting that "the ability to walk down the street" unmolested and without danger is a basic human right. Luna concurred and agreed that improved public security was integral both to human rights and to strengthening democracy.

[4](#). (U) Luna raised the subject of the events in Suchitoto (reftel A), stressing the importance of freedom of assembly, association, and speech, while at the same time saying that "human rights are not absolute rights," and freedoms must be exercised within the limits of the law. Luna also spoke of his desire to educate the Salvadoran people on their individual "duties" to uphold human rights.

[5](#). (U) According to Luna, relations between the PDDH and the National Civilian Police (PNC) are very good, and his office and the PNC have a memorandum of cooperation to work alongside political groups to promote "peaceful protest" and avoid confrontation. Luna expressed his concern over allegations of police corruption (reftel B), and said that he supported the creation of an independent commission (outside of the PDDH) to conduct a comprehensive review of the PNC. This review would identify institutional weaknesses and make recommendations for improvements within the PNC.

[6](#). (U) At the end of the meeting the Ambassador and Luna discussed ways that the Embassy and the PDDH could work together. The Ambassador and DCM suggested that the Embassy could assist the PDDH by sending staff to training sessions in the U.S. and bringing human rights experts to El Salvador. Luna was appreciative and said he thought this would be helpful.

¶7. (U) Comment: In sharp contrast to Beatrice de Carrillo, his predecessor, Luna appears to be a modest and deliberative leader of the PDDH. Luna went out of his way to point out that the PDDH is "not an NGO" and has an important mediating role within the GOES. The meeting with Luna reinforces our confidence (reftel C) in Luna's ability to regain credibility for the PDDH and reinforce El Salvador's democratic institutions. End Comment.
Glazer